

MAGONIA Supplement

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IN THE WAKE OF A UFO WAVE

M. J. Graeber

IT APPEARS THAT THE INVESTIGATOR'S MORE VALUABLE INSIGHTS CONCERNING A FLAP OF UFO ACTIVITY ARE NOT FOUND AMIDST THE HEAT, SMOKE AND FIRE OF THE ONGOING EVENTS – RATHER, THEY ARE DISCOVERED IN THE QUIET MOMENTS OF SIFTING THROUGH THE COLD DATA THAT WERE GATHERED DURING THE CONFLAGRATION.

Sifting through the ashes

Waves (or flaps) of reported UFO activity are particularly challenging to the UFO investigator because the number of reports that require his or her immediate attention puts a strain on the investigator's time and skills as well as those of their assistants.

UFO flaps, like a number of simultaneous house fire incidents, are filled with a high emotional charge, much confusion, and the excitement of the moment – so, it's after the reports subside that the UFO researcher (much like a fire investigator) has the opportunity to sift through the data that they have gathered in an attempt to determine exactly what might have happened. The result is that an unemotional "holistic" report is created, along with a far more "objective" estimate of the UFO situation.

The character of the reports

17 October 1973, Bucks County, South/Eastern Pennsylvania

It was 8:20 p.m. at the Bristol Township Police Headquarters as Officer Evans stepped outside to routinely inspect the canine training area. Suddenly, a strange glowing object streaked across the night-time sky and abruptly halted. As Evans watched in amazement, the red glow of the object slowly subsided and the outline of a silvery disc appeared. It was a UFO! Still watching over his shoulder, Evans ran to his office and quickly burst

into his locker in search of a pair of binoculars: upon returning to the grounds, the officer found the alien craft still hanging there, absolutely motionless, over the Blue Ridge section of Levittown. As he peered through his 10×50s, he noticed that this was a flying machine of most unusual design, totally unlike anything he had ever seen before.

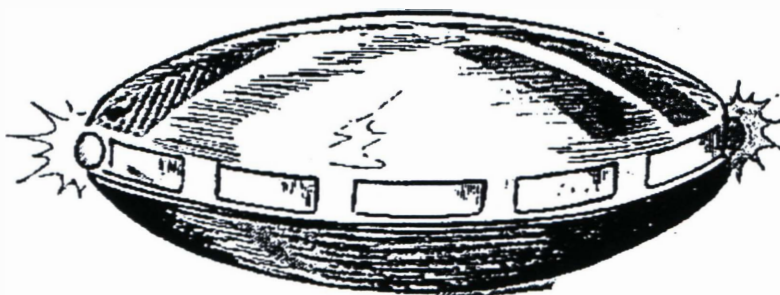
It looked like a big metallic cigar, he thought, had no wings or stabilisers, and it sported a red light on one end and a white light on the other. These flashed at a much slower rate than those of conventional aircraft, and he

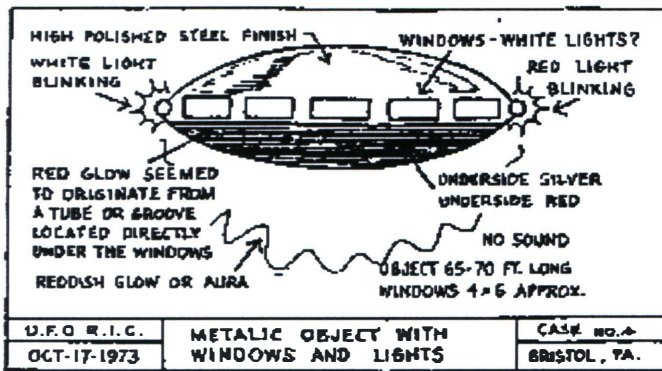
noticed a row of white lights, or windows situated along the thing's central edge. Abruptly, from a groove or tube positioned just beneath the windows, a red-orange glow emanated and quickly engulfed the craft's entire underside, casting a brilliant aura about 30 to 50 feet below the object.

Then, like a tracer bullet, it sped away toward the turnpike and suddenly stopped again, hanging there in the sky as its crimson glow appeared to dissipate once more.

Then the UFO suddenly flared up again as it zipped along in the direction of Route 13 and, after pausing at that location for a second or two, the UFO started up once more and skirted a parallel course with Bath Road.

At this point, the officer realised that a curiously misshapen box-like aerial pattern was being flown. Evans raced back to the K-9 office and





UFORIC drawing based on the description and sketch of the object which Officer Evans observed on 17 October 1973. (Dark area indicates the glowing red underside of the object.)

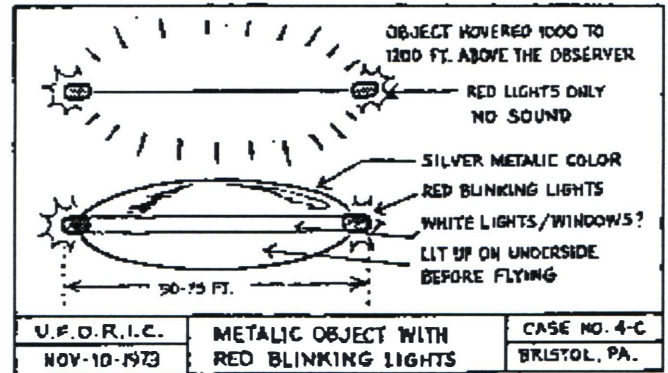
excitedly phoned his wife, for they resided nearby and she came running across the field and joined him at the bleacher section of the training area in a matter of minutes. While in each other's embrace, they stood watching in total fascination as a second craft (which looked exactly like the first UFO) suddenly came into view. At this point, both UFOs began flying in parallel formation performing even more odd patterns in the sky and, in what could only be called a spectacular finish, the gleaming discs flew in and out across each other's path, as if weaving a zigzag aerial trail.

Officer Evans estimates that his observation of the UFOs lasted for 15 to 20 minutes and during that time he popped into the headquarters building in order to alert fellow officers about the alien air show taking place; but, ironically, it was between-shifts time and only the phone dispatcher was there. When last observed, the UFOs had shrunk into the distance on a north-easterly course and completely vanished.

Upon returning to the headquarters building, Evans found the dispatcher hectically trying to deal with the sixth phone call about the flying saucers. In addition, several other reports were filed with the *Bucks County Courier-Times*, and military personnel at Warminster Naval Air Development Center were getting their share too.

But the strange air show wasn't over yet. Indeed, Evans had seen only the first act: for, at 1:45 p.m., 18 October 1973 (approximately five and one half hours later) a phone call came in from a very excited man at the DeGrand Diner on Route 13. He blurted out, "It crashed in the woods! I was driving along and all of a sudden this big bright thing came down!"

Officer Daniels was immediately dispatched to the "crash site" and while he was speeding along with his cruiser's lights flashing in urgency, he met up with three brilliant blue lights that flew across Fayette Drive. The patrolman then pursued the



UFORIC drawing based on the description and sketch of the object which Officer Pratt observed on 10 November 1973

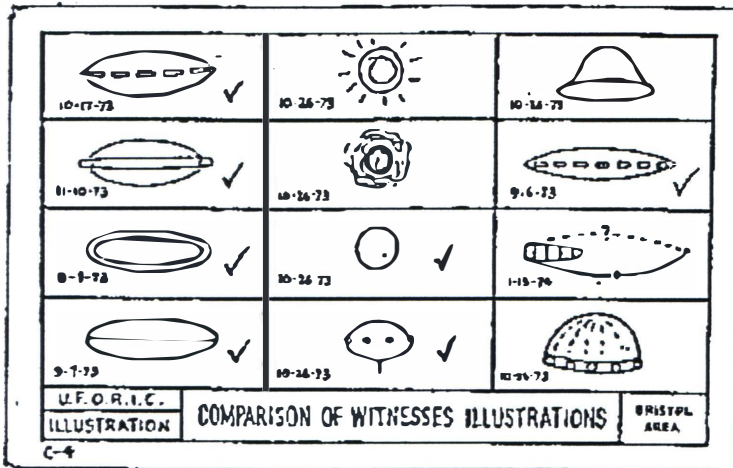
mysterious lights which moved steadily along and appeared to be affixed to a single body but, because of the darkness, he did not observe an actual outline. Then the object abruptly changed direction, progressing across his line of vision and onward over Route 13. Officer Daniels radioed the Bristol Borough Police as he continued his pursuit.

The Borough police, who happened to be patrolling nearby, joined him in a high-speed chase of the object down Radcliffe Street, but it all ended as abruptly as it had started when they pulled into the Mill Street shopping centre car park and helplessly watched as the blue phantom moved out beyond the marshy area that meets the Delaware River, and slowly disappeared into the night.

Daniels then hurriedly returned to make a search for the reported "downed object" off Route 13. Once there, he found nothing to indicate that anything had crashed or even landed in the wooded area. However, he did explain to this investigator that he was not sure of the exact location of the incident because of the reporting man's inability to pinpoint the alleged crash site for the police dispatcher.

As Officer Daniels returned to Police Headquarters, he encountered a group of women in a car who were approaching the Municipal Building's main driveway. They told him of a strange glowing object which was hovering below the tree line just off Bath Road near the grounds of the Lower Bucks County Hospital. They said, that he couldn't miss it, for the trees were brightly illuminated by the large UFO which was said to be slowly descending.

Upon arriving at the scene, seeing no lights, and after investigating on foot, he again found nothing unusual. Act Two of the air show was over and, although sporadic phone calls came in from time to time at Police Headquarters during the night and for several days to follow, the additional sightings usually concerned the observation of extremely high-flying points of light (something which ufologists



INVESTIGATIVE NOTE. The drawings which have a check mark next to them depict objects which were reported to have changed colour before flying.

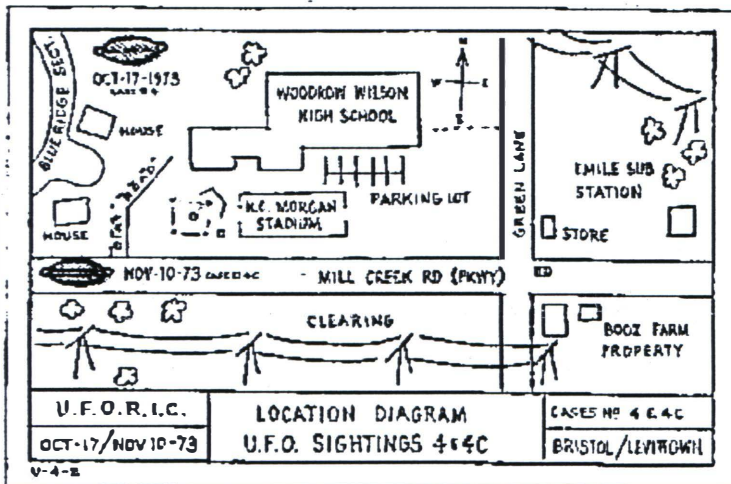


DIAGRAM. General area of observations made by Officer Evans and Officer Pratt.

classify as nocturnal light sightings – most high-altitude nocturnal light sightings involve the observation of stars, planets, meteors, satellites, and fixed-wing aircraft lighting). Therefore, nothing too remarkable in character occurred until 4:45 a.m. on the morning of 10 November 1973 – for this time it was Patrolman Pratt's turn to experience the UFO at fairly close range.

Officer Pratt's UFO encounter

While alone and driving his patrol car down Millcreek Parkway in the Blue Ridge section of Levittown, Officer Pratt happened to notice a pair of slowly pulsating red lights fixed in the sky directly ahead of him. At first he thought it was a helicopter about to land because, "It seemed to move so slowly or perhaps not at all", he said: but then, to his complete astonishment, he suddenly realised that he was unintentionally positioned directly under the

huge airborne oddity which was silently dangling in the sky.

"It was enormous", he said, "Big as a ranch-style house! I turned the cruiser's spotlight on it and it sure looked weird. Those big red lights slowly flashing and its dark upper outline just barely visible against the night-time sky. As my spotlight beam hit the bottom of the craft, it suddenly lit up all over, and I could see a band of white-lighted windows around the centre of it. I guess it stayed that way for about 15 to 20 seconds. That's when I made out that it was shaped like a long fat cigar. I watched it fly away until it was just a flicker of light. It never made a sound, no sound at all! I can't get over that!"

Upon returning to Police Headquarters, Pratt filed an official report and drew a sketch of what he had observed. Little did he know how closely it would resemble Officer Evans's drawing of the saucer he saw less than a month before.

According to Deputy Police Chief Leonard Stoughton, Officer Pratt hadn't read Officer Daniels's report, nor did he see the UFO drawing Evans made. Stoughton said, "I know for a fact that many of my officers never actually believed Evans's story and, boy, that guy sure took a ribbing! But then, with the second police sighting and now this observation with the remarkable similarity of the sketches . . . well, to tell you the truth, I never really believed in UFOs either, but now I just don't know what to say . . . except I believe in my men—they're professionals!"

Upon completion of the investigations regarding the numerous sightings in Bucks County, UFORIC's (the UFO Report and Information Center of Philadelphia, Pa.) official report concerning these observations was shared with the Aerial Phenomena research Organization (APRO) of Tucson, Arizona, and the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) of Kensington, Maryland. It was entitled *The Report on Findings in the Investigation of UFO Activity at Bristol/Levittown, Penna.* and was dated 31 August 1974.

It listed the techniques of the investigation which were carried out using three direct lines of communication with the reporting witnesses:

1. Personal Contacts: With 15 witnesses, these were interviews in which oral sighting reports of two hours or more were conducted. Several witnesses were visited more than once.
2. Phone contacts: Numerous phone contacts were

made during the months of November 1973 to February 1974. Information was requested from witnesses, supporting witnesses, news agencies, and one local magazine. Expert opinions were also requested in the fields of weather and electrical phenomena, aircraft configurations, and aircraft lighting characteristics. We also contacted several airports, military personnel, police officials, and a high school because it was rumoured that an entire class of students had observed a UFO, and one of them even photographed the object.

We estimate that about one hundred persons were contacted for one reason or another during our investigation. Moreover, because high-power lines and an electrical sub-station were situated in the immediate vicinity of the sightings, the possibility of electro-plasma discharges being responsible for the reports was also explored.

3. Letter Contacts; Ten letters were mailed with questionnaires requesting written reports from people whom local newspapers and a magazine had identified as witnesses.

Investigative findings

The sightings reportedly started in early September of 1973 and terminated in February of 1974 – there were substantial time gaps between many of the observations. Two on-site investigations of suspected UFO landing sites were conducted. Nothing was found during either field trip.

The tantalising reports concerning the existence of photographic evidence which appeared in the local press and in a Philadelphia-based magazine were erroneous.

Two police reports were very interesting and seemed quite similar in regard to the object's configuration and aerial manoeuvrability.

However, one officer (Officer Pratt) did not co-operate with our investigative process and every attempt to contact him by phone, letter or in person was in vain. He did file an official report to Police Headquarters, however, and we have pieced his story together from that somewhat sketchy document and a

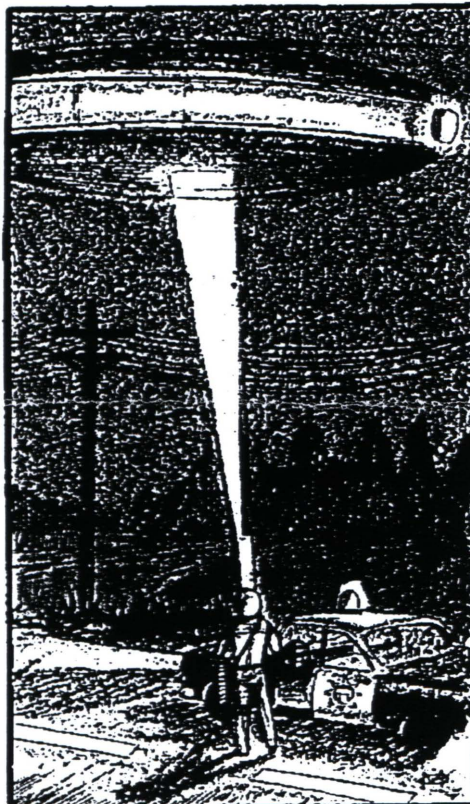
newspaper article on the sightings which was vague in some areas. Ironically, we think that this officer may have the most valuable information regarding the unidentified objects observed at Bristol/Levittown because his close encounter with a UFO is said to have occurred while he was positioned directly beneath a hovering craft which he had estimated to be at an altitude of 1,000 to 2,000 feet with the aid of his police cruiser's spotlight. Unfortunately, Officer Pratt resigned from the Bristol Township Police Department shortly after his UFO experience. Police officials declined to elaborate on the reason for his departure.

Two newspapers were contacted requesting addresses or phone numbers of witnesses which they had identified in their articles as UFO observers. One newspaper complied – the other did not.

A local magazine which published a lengthy article about the Bristol sightings was also contacted requesting addresses or phone numbers of the witnesses identified in their publication. After several phone conversations and two letters, it became quite apparent that the article was a hoax, complete with a bogus photo of a saucer which was admittedly prepared by a freelance photographer with some assistance in the form of photo retouching by the magazine's art department. So, regrettably, it is evident that at least one publication on the sightings had completely fabricated its accounts of the Bristol UFO observations.

According to our "mathematical guestimates" which were based on Officer Evans's descriptions of the unidentified objects' size, speeds, altitude, and the point-to-point distances they appeared to traverse while operating in the skies over Bucks County, we

think the velocity during the straight-line phases of flight was about 3,600 mph. The saucers also reportedly displayed almost instantaneous acceleration and deceleration capabilities, and yet our records indicate that there were no mentions of sonic reports being heard by the witnesses even though they should have been detected while the sighting was in progress. Curiously, several small private aircraft were noticed flying in the vicinity at the time



A sketch depicting the setting of Officer Pratt's close encounter with a UFO. (The scale is misleading, as the report indicates that the object was actually at a much higher altitude when observed.)

of the UFO observations and Officer Evans said they were easily distinguishable from the UFOs.

We therefore suspect (because of this comparison factor) that it is possible that the witness did report accurately on the configurations of the unidentified objects which he perceived. However, it should also be noted that the primary witness in this incident was observing the UFOs through a pair of 10x50 power binoculars and that his estimates concerning the saucers' flight speeds may not be very reliable descriptions of the occurrence, simply because they tend to be at odds with well-established physical laws involving sonics and inertia, which should have produced some sort of noticeable effect upon physical objects moving at such velocities within atmospheric conditions (that is, assuming that our laws of physics apply). What's more, not one private, commercial or military aircraft pilot filed a UFO report pertaining to that time period or locality even though small aircraft were observed by Officer Evans and his wife at the time of the incident.

Object descriptions and flight characteristics

1. The objects appeared to be made of a metallic substance of some sort and were silver in colour, like highly polished steel or aluminium.
2. The objects turned red or red-orange on the underside before traversing the sky.
3. The objects were silvery on the underside when hovering motionlessly.
4. The objects did not emit any sort of vapour or sounds while either in flight or hovering modes of airborne activity.
5. The objects displayed extremely high-speed angular turns and oscillatory manoeuvres were also mentioned.
6. The objects, reportedly, had blinking multi-coloured lights similar to those of conventional aircraft, which pulsated slowly; red and white were the most frequently mentioned variety, followed by blue and blue-green.
7. Some of the objects were said to have had a row of windows or white lights situated along their central or leading edges. One report mentioned that the lights or windows appeared to rotate, something like a movie marquee. We have encountered this characteristic before in several UFO reports that turned out to be misidentifications of advertising planes, but such craft do not fly at such great velocities nor do they hover. Moreover, our attempts to establish the presence of advertising blimps flying in the vicinity of the observations was also fruitless.
8. It has not been absolutely established whether the objects were disc-shaped craft observed in profile or

cigar-shaped structures.

9. Two of the objects reported were described as flying rapidly, hovering motionlessly, gliding, and zigzagging through the air in tight flying formations at tremendous speeds.

10. Several objects were said to be operating at moderately low altitudes such as those of small private aircraft circling in the vicinity of an airport (i.e., estimated to be at 1,600 to 2,400 feet).

11. The description of the objects' speeds, instantaneous stops and fantastic (non-banking) turns defies or exceeds the restrictions normally applicable to any sort of rigidly structured aircraft or spacecraft (piloted or remote controlled) operating within Earth's atmosphere; yet the witnesses described the UFOs as appearing to be rigid (physical) constructs—not vaporous images or glowing globs of light (i.e., as electro-plasma).

12. There were no reports of UFO operators being observed either on the ground or in the flying objects at any time during the period of the reported UFO activity.

These sightings are extremely interesting and the frequent description of colour change prior to movement could be an indication of how these UFOs are propelled, or perhaps point to the existence of the craft having an energy release or absorption system of some sort?

In our research on published UFO reports which have similarities to the Bristol objects either structurally or kinetically we found over twenty such accounts. In our own files we discovered yet another such sighting:

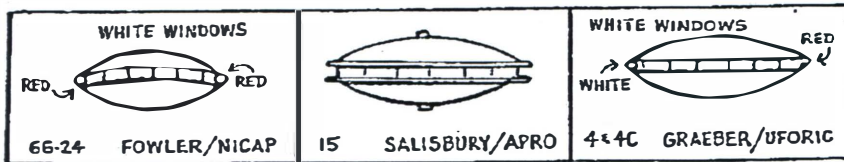
Glenside, Pennsylvania, 15 January 1974

UFORIC file: Five adults observed four objects today which appeared to change colour from white to orange when viewed through binoculars. One witness said the objects were definitely reddish-orange on the underside when they flew.

In our search of the UFO literature, especially books and articles written by serious investigators, we found and compiled this partial listing of reports in which objects were observed displaying colour changing characteristics similar to those of the Bristol UFOs. For your consideration we offer just a few examples.

Virginia, 14 July 1952

"Moving westward, the formation of UFOs was joined by two other discs. In the few seconds during which they speeded up to reach the formation, they gave off a red glow that was brighter than usual.



Comparison of reported UFO configurations (APRO, NICAP, UFORIC)

Suddenly, all the discs went dark, and a few seconds later when they became bright again the eight machines appeared in a straight line." From the book, *Intercept UFOs* by Renado Vesco.

Equatorial Africa, 22 November 1952

Father Carlos Maria and Mr LaSimone's story: "When they came to a standstill, they were pale silver in colour. Just before moving, they blazed up as bright as the sun. When they stopped, the bright blaze died down to the original dull silver. Suddenly, one of the discs turned bright crimson! Its red glow then faded away to a silvery gleam and its outer line disappeared." *The Truth About Flying Saucers* by Aimé Michel

Albany, New York, 8 April 1956

Captain Raymond E. Ryan, American Airlines Flight 755. "The UFO's glow returned with an orange tinge – as it slowed its brilliant glow faded out." *Flying Saucers Top Secret*, by Donald E. Keyhoe, chapter 12.

Redmond, Oregon, 24 September 1959

"At Redmond, the FAA observers were still watching the UFO – as the planes dived toward the spacecraft the tongues of flame vanished. Then a fiery exhaust

blasted from the bottom of the disc." *Aliens from Space* by Donald E. Keyhoe.

Nederland, Texas, 19 June 1965

"Suddenly, I realised the light was coming from overhead. I looked up and saw the outline of an object moving approximately 250–500 feet high. The red glow was coming from beneath the object, about centre." *The UFO Experience* by J. Allen Hynek.

Niagara Falls, New York, 19 August 1965

"Then the boy noticed a football-shaped object hovering just above the trees about 500 feet from the barn. Harold (the boy) described his saucer as about 50 feet long and 20 feet thick. When it moved vertically, the craft emitted a red vapour from the bottom. When it moved laterally, a yellow trail of vapour appeared from one of the ends." *The Search for Life on Other Worlds* by David C. Holmes.

Sharon, Massachusetts, 19 April 1966

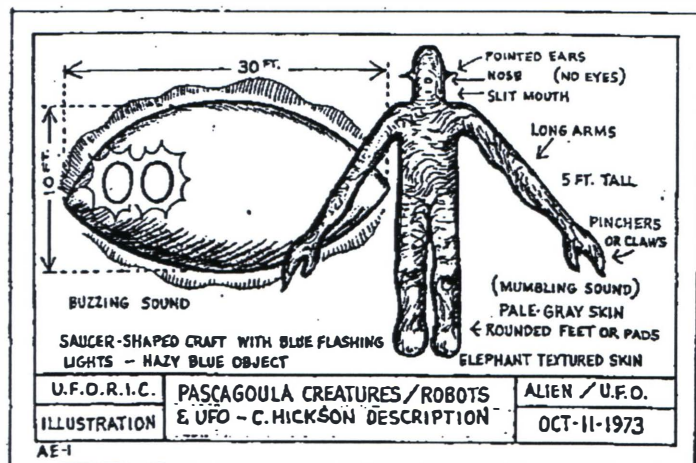
"The police arrived in response to a report of a UFO. They described the object as being oval-shaped with a glowing rim which looked like lighted windows. The object carried a steady red light on each end and was about the size of a car." *UFOs Interplanetary Visitors* by Raymond Fowler.

Ashland, Nebraska, 3 December 1967

Herbert Schirmer (policeman): A contactee report describing the take-off of an alien space vehicle! "The legs on the ship retracted, a reddish orange light emanates from the underside." Schirmer's drawing of the object he describes is very similar to the Bristol officers' drawings. Two books by Eric Norman, *Gods, Demons and Space Chariots* and *Gods and Devils from Outer Space*.

Canada, 1974

Constables Neil Trites and Glen Esterbooks spotted an object 1,000 feet above them which they pursued by car. "It was like a ball of fire that kept changing colours from red-orange to white. Source, Alex Maten, a spokesman for the Canadian National Research Council, an official government UFO investigation agency, 5 May 1974.



THE HICKSON/PARKER CONTACT CASE, 11 October 1973, Pascagoula, Mississippi. According to Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker of Pascagoula, the two had their night-time fishing trip suddenly interrupted by three strange creatures which carried them on board a hazy blue flying saucer and subjected them to medical examinations. Hickson said he was terrified during the experience and Parker fainted as he was floated into the alien ship.

If one's judgement is affected by sheer weight of numbers, then the descriptions we've just read would tend to bolster the idea that there is a favourable degree of UFO report accuracy coming from many individuals all over the world, but this in itself does not prove anything about UFOs, it only tells us that

some people are reportedly seeing things that look somewhat similar.

Thus the data gathered at Bristol/Levittown, Pennsylvania, or anywhere else for that matter, is at best only "prima-facie evidence", that is, evidence which, if left unchecked or unchallenged, would appear to establish the fact alleged by so many UFO witnesses and investigative aficionados (i.e., that UFOs are extraterrestrial spacecraft visitations).

But because of the potential observational and investigative shortcomings we've encountered during our study of these sightings we must also consider the fact that a closer look at the witnesses who reported the Lower Bucks County objects might be enlightening to our study, especially in regard to considerations directed along the lines that a kind of spontaneous "mild form of hysteria" might have occurred during the flap of reported UFO activity.

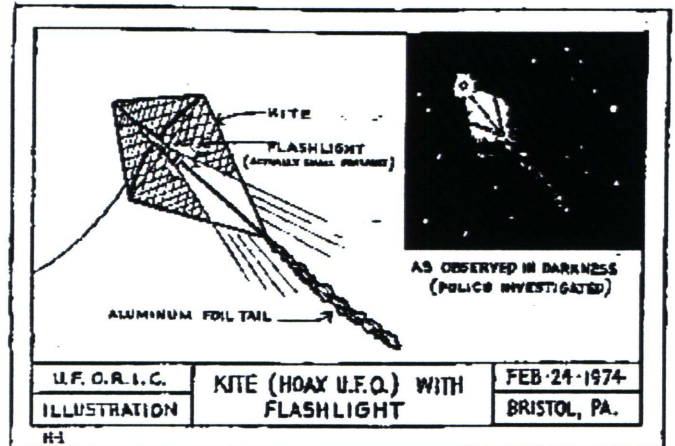
However, in examining this potential aspect of the cases, we must not be drawn into the error of assuming that even if we could positively identify nine out of ten sightings as probable misidentifications of one type or another which were induced by hysteria or even a localised "bandwagon effect" of some sort, that does not mean that every sighting must have been a similarly induced occurrence. But we do know that several police-band scanner owners who intercepted official radio messages during the primary occurrences may have started highly charged rumours about the UFO sightings.

Moreover, in retrospect, we also know that when the first Bucks County police observations occurred, the country was already on the tail end of a heavy flap of national saucer activity which was highlighted by the alleged kidnapping and medical examination of two Mississippi shipyard workers by "robot-like" alien creatures.

As this wave of UFO activity was being widely publicised through radio, television, magazines, and many newspapers, we, the American public, were subjected to very heavy doses of UFO exposure via media hype.

Some saucer researchers feel that after such a media saucer hype bombardment a certain amount of bandwagon effect does occur and, consequently, more UFO reports and hoaxes are generated. We also suspected that this might be the case during the Bristol/Levittown sightings and felt that it might be very useful to our study if we had a reasonable "bandwagon percentage figure" to work with.

So it came to mind that we had to create our own localised sampling of "UFO sensationalism" through publication. We did this by writing a UFO



The kite and pen-light contraption was actually observed at Bristol, Pa. during the flap activity of 1974. It was investigated by local authorities and found to be the handiwork of some pranksters.

article for the *Bucks County Courier-Times* which appeared on 29 December 1974 (four pages in the magazine section of the Sunday paper). In that article, we not only reported the accounts of the Bucks County sightings in great detail, but also presented strong arguments which supported the extraterrestrial visitations hypothesis. The article was enhanced with the police sketches and a fabricated UFO photo.

We even went so far as to invite more reports by subtly asking for the public's response to a question concerning the possibility of seeking a renewed governmental study of the saucers. The paper had a distribution of 35,000, and of that number only four new reports were forthcoming, two of which were categorised as probable weather phenomena. One was a hoax and the other lacked sufficient data to be of any investigative value. What's more, not one of the new cases (excluding the hoax object) conformed to the descriptions of objects reported during any of the previous Bucks County sightings.

Whether or not this sampling is typical of the national or global bandwagon effect generated by UFO rumours, media hype or hysteria is not known; however, we feel it may be of some potential value to the cases we've examined, simply because it might inform us that the "timing of the event" may be just as a crucial a factor to examine as what was observed. In fact, this sampling led us to ask ourselves if there existed a possible specific time slot or "event window" through which emotionally charged UFO encounters might take place?

In fact, we were already wondering if the UFOs observed at Bristol/Levittown were physical objects or projected holographic imagery that were seen darting about. This could explain the UFOs' apparent physics-defying aerobatics. But if the UFOs

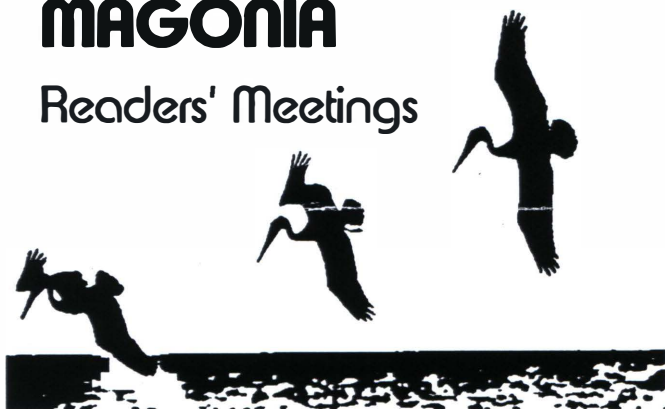
were projections of some kind, where did they come from and why were they being projected?

UFORIC investigators later discovered that students at Swarthmore College had been performing "projection experiments" with basic geometric forms like triangles and circles. But they were over 50 miles south-west of Bristol, much too distant to be seen, and involved imagery being projected upon low cloud cover, unlike the many clear-sky observations at Bristol Levittown.

So, despite our best efforts, the objects that were reportedly observed at Bristol/Levittown in 1973/74 remain unidentified and a challenge to the completeness of our concepts of physics and our sense of reality.

MAGONIA

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First Sunday of each month, 1915-2230, at the Railway, opposite Putney station

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EDITORIAL

In important American UFO cases, investigators like to use polygraphs to test the veracity of witnesses. In an article in this newsletter about the Walton case (No. 2, April 1998) I wrote:

"I was surprised, when I started looking at the literature on this case, to see how much space was devoted to the use of this absurd contraption. Believers and sceptics alike seem to treat it with great reverence. The descriptions and controversy concerning polygraph tests used in the Walton investigation have done nothing to alter my perception that 'lie detector' testing is just one of those strange and irrational American customs, like shooting holes in road signs.

"The believers asserted that the polygraph tests showed that the witnesses were telling the truth and the sceptics were satisfied that they showed that they were liars. Again, the lack of consensus goes to confirm my impressions about this gadget."

Now I see from a report in *The Sunday Telegraph* (27 October 2002) that a government-sponsored study by the American Academy of Sciences has concluded that the polygraph is so inaccurate and vague that it actually constitutes a "danger to national security". The panel found that to catch eight out of 10 spies, an estimated 1,600 innocent interviewees would also be placed under suspicion, rendering the results meaningless.

On the basis of a series of polygraph tests, Wen Ho Lee, an experienced scientist at Los Alamos, was accused in 1999 of passing nuclear secrets to China. He was later exonerated of all spying charges. Last year, Ana B. Montes, the Pentagon's senior Cuba analyst, confessed to a 16-year spying career for Fidel Castro. She had easily passed obligatory polygraph examinations before taking on her job.

Hopefully, this means that there will in future be fewer instances of American ufologists attempting to solve puzzling cases by wasting time and money on testing witnesses with this useless, pseudoscientific gadget.

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